

WEST'S PAINTINGS.

LETTER

FROM THE

SONS OF BENJAMIN WEST, DECEASED,

LATE

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF LONDON,

OFFERING TO SELL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

SUNDRY

Paintings

OF THAT ARTIST.

DECEMBER 11, 1826.

Read, and laid upon the table.

WASHINGTON :

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1826.

To the Hon. J. W. TAYLOR,

Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States of America.

SIR: The sons of the late Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy of London, most respectfully address you. Their motive for thus addressing you is, to request that you will do them the favor to represent to Congress the desire they have of offering the body of their father's works, which has devolved to them, to the Government of the United States for purchase, feeling deeply impressed with the conviction that the works of their father should find their final place of destiny in his native country. Their father was the first American born subject who distinguished himself by a spontaneous pursuit of the fine arts, his extraordinary love of which induced him to leave his native country in the twenty-first year of his age, to study the works of the renowned masters of that art, which were to be seen in Italy.

After the completion of his studies in Italy, which he prosecuted, during four years, with such avidity that it occasioned a fever which nearly deprived him of life, he went for England, where his talent for the arts very soon attracted the attention of some leading amateur characters; and his having painted a picture of an interesting subject, that displayed his abilities, for the Archbishop of York, he shortly after became honored by the notice and patronage of the king, (George the Third,) who beneficently sustained him in his practice and study of the fine arts for nearly forty years, and engaged him in great plans, from the subjects of English history and the sacred writings, for the embellishment of Windsor Castle. Under the sanction of his majesty, he became one of the original founders of the Royal Academy in London. In testimony, also, of his talent, and the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries in the art, they elected him twenty-seven times President of the Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, (of which he was one of the original founders,) and as a further sanction of the abilities he possessed as an artist, and of the spreading abroad of his fame, he likewise received honorable distinctions from most of the academies for the encouragement and promotion of the fine arts in the polished countries of Europe. Whenever his works first made their appearance before the public, they excited a very strong sensation throughout the metropolis; and his three latter productions, Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple, (which has since been presented by Mr. West to the Hospital of Philadelphia,) Christ Rejected by the Jews, and his daring and extraordinary picture of Death on the Pale Horse, produced no common sensation on the minds of the people of England. His demise, which took place after he had passed his eighty-first year, was considered and felt as a public loss, for the circumstance of his

latter productions appearing, at his venerable age, amongst the most vigorous and sublime of his works, occasioned a very remarkable augmentation to his fame at the close of his life. His remains were honored by a public funeral, and were interred in the great Cathedral of St. Paul's, within the city of London, where all the members of the Royal Academy, many of the nobility, his relatives and select friends, attended, in token of their high estimation of his genius, and in respect for his excellent moral character and amiable disposition : but he had enemies, who occasioned him much anxiety and difficulty in his latter years.

The career he ran in the art, whilst residing in London, occupied a space of more than half a century. He left his native country in the year 1760, and became deceased, in the city of London, on the 10th of March, 1820. The number of the works that he has left behind him is indeed truly astonishing : his whole life was one scene of industry, perseverance, and endeavor to perfect himself in the art, and to dispense to others, (especially to young and rising artists,) the knowledge that he had thus diligently acquired. It is, therefore, very generally considered, that, so long as science, or art, or virtue, shall exist, the name of Benjamin West will stand pre-eminent in honorable fame.

After giving this little outline of the life of Mr. West, his sons now beg of you to offer, in their names, to the Government of the United States, that portion of his works which has devolved to them. They hope that the offer will not be rejected, devoutly wishing that the name of their father may thus honorably be transmitted to the posterity of the country wherein he was born, and that the portion of his works, which they now offer, may form the foundation of a school for the growth of the fine arts in the rapidly advancing States of America. In Europe, almost every where is to be seen what is generally denominated a National Gallery, composed of pictures and statues by the old masters : the honor of having produced them belonging to Italy and Greece, no country ever yet had such an opportunity of commencing a truly National Gallery as now presents itself to the United States of America ; for none of the nations of the old world, at such an early period of their histories, ever had an artist who stood so distinguished in the eyes of the world, or that had produced so numerous and so diversified a body of celebrated works as Benjamin West. They are the productions of American born genius, and let them be deposited in whatever quarter of the globe destiny may place them, the honor of having produced them belongs to the United States of America.

Hoping that, from your situation in the House of Representatives, you will not find it at variance with your duty and opinions to speak and use your influence in recommendation of our offer,

We remain, with the highest consideration and respect,
Your obedient servants,

RAPHAEL L. WEST.
BENJAMIN WEST.

NEWMAN STREET, LONDON, *April 12th, 1826.*

LIST of Pictures painted by the late Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in London.

No.		Wide.	High.
1	Christ Rejected, - - -	22 ft.	16 ft. 10 in.
2	Death on the Pale Horse, - -	25 ft. 6 in.	12 6
3	Mark Anthony showing the Robe and and Will of Cæsar, - -	9 3	6
4	Nathan and David, - -	9	7
5	Raising the Shunamite's Son, - -	6 6	6
6	Saul Prophesying, - -	8 7	5 7
7	Death of General Wolfe, - -	8	5 5
8	Battle at La Hogue, - -	8	5 5
9	The Triumph of Love over Animated Nature, - - -	7	6
10	Landscape view of Windsor Castle, with the Royal Hunt, - -	7	5
11	Phæton soliciting Apollo for the Chariot of the Sun, - -	7	4 8
12	Cicero discovering the Tomb of Ar- chimedes, - - -	6	4 1
13	Telemachus and Mentor on the Is- land of Calypso, - -	4 4	3 4
14	Pætus and Arria, - -	6	8
15	The Bard, (from Grey,) - -	6	8
16	Daniel interpreting the Writing on the Wall, - - -	6	4 2
17	Tobit and the Angel, - -	5 2	3 10
18	Saint Thomas à Becket, - -	3 4	10
19	Saint Margaret of Scotland, - -	3 4	10
20	Venus and Adonis, - -	7	5 8
21	Hagar and Ishmael, - -	4 6	6 3
22	Iris coming to Priam, - -	5 10½	4
23	Antiochus and Stratonice, - -	6	4 1
24	The Stolen Kiss, - -	5 2	4 2
25	Cupid and Psyche, - -	4 8	4 8
26	Cupid Stung by a Bee, - -	4 3	3 4
27	The Overthrow of the False Prophet, Elijah Raising the Widow's Son, -	4 8	3 4
28	Elijah Raising the Widow's Son, -	4 6	5 5
29	Landscape—Paddington Canal and Pleasure Boats, - -	4 8	3 4
30	General Johnson rescuing a French Officer, - - -	3 4	4 2
31	The Messiah, - -	3 3	4 1
32	The Ascension, - -	2 10½	4 2

LIST—Continued.

No.		Wide.	High.
33	Chryses invoking Apollo, - -	3 ft. 4 in.	4 ft. 2 in.
34	Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, -	2 6	3 1
35	Overthrow of Pharaoh and his Host,	2 6	3 1
36	Moses consecrating Aaron and his Sons, - - -	3	
37	Paul and Barnabas Preaching, -	2 4	3
38	Christ Healing the Sick, - -	3 10	2 5
39	The Raising of Lazarus, - -	3 10	2 5
40	The Shipwreck of St. Paul, -	2 4	4
41	The Wise Men's Offering, - -	1 11	4
42	Landscape—Narcissus at the Foun- tain, - - -	3	2
43	Venus and Adonis, with Cupid's Bathing, - - -	3 3	2 4
44	Angelica and Medor, - - -	2 4	3
45	View of Tintern Abbey, - -	2 4	3
46	Landscape—Wood Cutters in Wind- sor Great Park, - - -	3	1 4
47	Landscape—View in Windsor For- rest, - - -	2 9	2
48	Landscape, - - -	2 9	2
49	Thetis bringing the Armor to Achilles,	2 3	1 8
50	The Combat between Hector and Diomedes, - - -	2 3	1 8
51	The Captive, - - -	1 2½	1 7½
52	The Dead Ass, - - -	1 2½	1 7½
53	Landscape—Harvest, - - -	2 3	1 7½
54	Angels at the Tomb of Our Saviour,	11	1 2¼
55	Angels delivering St. Peter from Prison, - - -	11	1 2¼
56	Moses Viewing the Promised Land,	2 5	1 8½
57	Simeon and the Child, - - -	2 2	1 8½
58	Belisarius and the Boy, - - -	1 6	2
59	A Child fearful of crossing a Brook,	1 9	1 4
60	King Lear and Cordelia, - -	1 11½	1 6½
61	St. Anthony of Padua, - - -	1 6½	2 2
62	The naming of John, - - -	1 9	1 3½
63	The Birth of Jacob and Esau, -	1 9	1 3½
64	The Last Supper, - - -	1 2	10½
65	Samuel presented to Eli, - -	1 5	12½
66	The Resurrection of Our Saviour, -	1 6	2
67	Jacob and Laban, - - -	1 7½	1 2

LIST—Continued.

No.		Wide.	High.
68	Mothers with their Children at a Brook, - - -	2 ft. 2 in.	1 ft. 6½ in.
69	Hector parting from his Wife and Child, - - -	1 4½	1 2
70	St. George and the Dragon, -	11	1 2
71	View on the Susquehannah, -	1 5½	1 1½
72	The Resurrection of Our Saviour, -	1 1	1 4
73	Landscape and Cattle, - - -	1 3½	11½
74	Cupid on a Bed of Roses, - - -	1 2½	11
75	Arion on the Dolphin, - - -	1	9
76	The Angel at the Tomb of Christ, -	11	1 3
77	Cephalus lamenting the Death of Procris, - - -	1 4	1 1
78	King Richard pardoning his Brother John, - - -	1 2	1 6½
79	Thetis bringing the Armor to Achilles	2 2	1 8
80	Aaron staying the Plague, - - -	3 1	2 4
81	The Marys at the Sepulchre, - -	2 10	2 10
82	The Nativity of Our Saviour, - -	1 8	2 4
83	Return of the Prodigal Son, - - -	1	11
84	Ariadne on the Sea Shore, - - -	1	11
85	Tobit's Return, - - -	1	11
86	Venus weeping over the Body of Adonis, - - -	1	11
87	The Ascension of Our Saviour, - -	7½	11
88	Christ among the Doctors, - - -	1 3½	11
89	Children eating Cherries, - - -	9	7
90	General Kosciusko, - - -	1 4½	12
91	Presentation of the Crown to William the Conqueror, - - -	1 2½	1 7½
92	Agisthus viewing the Body of Clytemnestra, - - -	4 5	3 5
93	Cupid and Psyche, - - -	1	1 2
94	Christ showing a little Child as the emblem of Heaven, - - -	1 9	2 3
95	The Wise Men's Offering, - - -	1 10	2 3
96	Venus and Cupid, - - -	1 4	12
97	Madona and Child, - - -	8	11
98	Christ and the Angel, - - -	2	1 6
99	St. John, - - -	1 1	1 5½
100	View of Tangier Mill, near Windsor,	1 9	2 5
101	The Death of Sir Philip Sydney— Epaminondas, and the Chevalier Bayard, (in one frame,) each -	11	10

LIST—Continued.

No.		Wide.	High.
102	Characters in the Streets of London,	1 ft. 8½ in.	1 ft. 3 in.
103	Ophelia before the King, - - -	2 3	1 9
104	The Expulsion of Adam and Eve, -	2 4½	1 7
105	The Surrender of Calais, - - -	1 8½	1 3
106	Edward 3d crossing the River Somme,	1 9	1 5
107	The Institution of the Order of the Garter, - - - -	1 10	1 4
108	Edward 3d embracing his Son after the Battle of Cressy, - - -	2 1	1 2½
109	A Landscape, - - - -	1 9	1 3
110	Edward 3d Crowning Ribemond, -	1 8½	1 8
111	Edward, the Black Prince, receiv- ing King John of France, Prison- er, after the Battle of Poitiers,	2 1½	1 4½
112	Queen Philippa at the Battle of Nevil's Cross, - - -	1 8½	1 3
113	Joshua crossing the River Jordan,	2 5	1 8½
114	Sheep Washing, - - - -	1 4½	1
115	A Fishing Party, - - - -	1 4	1
116	The Good Samaritan, - - - -	3	2 3
117	Psyche obtaining the Guarded Water,	1 4½	1
118	Procession of Queen Elizabeth to St. Paul's, - - - -	2 2	1 5
119	View of Cranford Bridge, - - -	3	2 3
120	Design for a Monument to Lord Nelson,	2 3	3 4
121	Chryseis restored to her Father, -	3 3	1 4
122	The Cave of Despair, - - - -	2 6	2
123	Pætus and Arria, - - - -	2 6	3
124	Abraham going to sacrifice his Son Isaac, - - - -	2 4	1 8½
125	The Golden Age, - - - -	2 6	2 2
126	Adonis, - - - -	1 2	1 8
127	Musidora, - - - -	2 4	1 8½
128	Arethusa, - - - -	1 3	1 8½
129	Three Heads, - - - -	2 1	1 7
130	A Landscape—Evening, - - -	2	1 6
131	Venus attired by the Graces, - -	1 2	1 8
132	Genius calling forth the Fine Arts, -	2	1 7½
133	Manufactory giving support to In- dustry, - - - -	2	1 7½
134	Husbandry aided by Arts and Com- merce, - - - -	2	1 7½

LIST—Continued.

No.		Wide.	High.
135	Four Quarters of the Globe bringing Treasures to Britannia, - -	2 ft. in.	1 ft. 7½ in.
136	Marine and Inland Navigation enriching Britannia, - -	2	1 7½
137	Moonlight—the Beckoning Ghost, -	1 2	1 6½
138	The first attempt in Painting by Mr. West, when a boy, in America,	1 5	1 1
139	Boys and Grapes, (Mr. West's last picture,) - - -	3	2 4
	<i>Original Designs in Chiaro Scuro for the large Pictures which were painted for his late Majesty's Chapel in Windsor Castle.</i>		
140	Moses receiving the Laws on Mount Sinai, - - -	4 2	2 11
141	The Prophet Isaiah, - - -	3	1 2
142	The Prophet Jeremiah, - - -	3	1 2
143	The Ascension of Our Saviour, -	4 2	2 4
144	St. Peter's First Sermon, - - -	3	2 4
145	Paul and Barnabas preaching, -	3	2 4
146	The Baptism of Our Saviour, -	3	2 4
147	Christ Healing the Sick, - - -	3	2 4
148	The Raising of Lazarus—the original design for the altar-piece in Winchester Cathedral, - - -	3	2 6
149	Alfred Dividing his Loaf with the Pilgrim. The Original Design for the Picture in Stationer's Hall,	} 2 2	1 7
150	Christ Raising the Widow's Son, -		
		1 9½	3 8

